

The Late Night Shift by **ghibliterritory**

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alternate Universe - Post-Canon, F/M, It's pure fluff, Mike has a job at a movie theater, it's sort of like a date night, not really tho

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Summary:

Mike always loved the late night shift.

The Late Night Shift

Author's Note:

For El!! You know who you are boo

The late night shifts had always been Mike's favorite. Ever since he started to work at The Hawk movie theater, he'd been more than pleased with late night shifts. It was perfect- few people came in, unless there was a premier, and he almost had the whole theater to himself. Mike couldn't complain. Even when he didn't get the chance to sleep before going into them.

Yeah, that was kind of a problem. One that was currently biting him in the ass as he swept out an empty theater, eyelids just barely managing to stay open as the clicks from the projection room echoed down. He'd admit, he had a better time sleeping now than he used to, what with the passing of trauma and all. But it was still difficult. So many nights with his super-comm on and the lights in the basement blaring had conditioned him to be a little less ready to sleep. Mike managed to roll with it, though. He always just rolled with it. Whatever 'it' was.

It seemed to take forever before the theater was cleaned up (thanks, you littering assholes), but he was glad when it was done. He dumped all the trash into the giant can, and pulled it out of the theater, getting ready to roll it outside to the dumpster. The only thing in his way was a distant figure, looking almost a little lost in the space. Mike hardly bit back a smile.

"El." He spoke up loud enough for her to hear, instantly catching El's attention as she whipped around to look at him. She mirrored his smile and the two walked towards each other, meeting somewhere in the middle of the hallway. Like magnets, their hands laced together

instantly. "What are you doing here so late?" Mike asked, not complaining but definitely curious. "Don't you have an incredibly strict curfew?"

A soft laugh passed her lips, the way he exaggerated his questions always managing to do that.

"He let me out." El replied softly, almost like it was a secret. "He knew you were working tonight, and since I've never been..."

Mike's grin grew. Hopper may have been tough on them hanging out, but he was nice about it in smaller ways. "Yeah, I always forget that sometimes." He admitted. It was almost alien how much she'd missed in life- not that he blamed her- and he'd set out to show her all of it. As much as he could, anyway. There had been steady progress. Not as fast as he'd hoped, but it was still progress. Tonight felt like a bonus. "Well, since you're here, and I don't think we should expect anyone else, maybe I can get us into a theater. I can ask one of the projection guys to play a movie. If, you know, that's cool and all." Mike's free hand went to nervously push hair from his eyes, watching her reaction. It was almost entrancing, how happiness could just spread into her eyes like a reflection. El nodded gently, and a sudden giddiness flowed through him. He leaned down and kissed the corner of her mouth. "Meet me at Door C. There's some stuff I gotta do."

With that, Mike practically raced off in a billion directions, starting with the snack counter. He practically begged the cashier to give him *something* (he had to settle for M&M's, considering that they didn't sell Eggos at movie theaters). He got a bunch of snickers and suggestive glances, but was given the candy nevertheless with the warning that it would come out of his paycheck. A drink or two later, and he continued his adventure to the projection booth of Space C, also begging *them* to play a movie. This didn't require as much

convincing, which Mike was thankful for as he went back down. As expected, El stood in front of the door, playing with a loose curl. Her hair had grown a lot recently, a stark contrast from their first meeting, but he loved it. The curls were a good look. Mike joined her side, and after another few minutes of just staring at each other, they slipped inside and found the perfect seats, thanking god the theater was empty. He handed over a drink, and explained the new snack to her, before the movie began.

The film itself was *The Breakfast Club*, which Mike had come to enjoy after a few times of watching it. He didn't really laugh at it- but hey, neither did El. She smiled at parts, and giggled here and there, but mostly her gaze was one of confusion. She popped M&M's into her mouth repeatedly, pretty much hoarding the box, while she tried to figure it out. Mike barely paid attention to the movie. His eyes wandered to her like they always did, staring at the familiar face in the dark. Before he even realized it, the movie was coming to a close, the film's opening song ringing around the space again. El finally seemed to notice his staring, and he didn't quite escape her gaze fast enough, turning back to the screen with burning cheeks. She chuckled quietly, and took his hand.

"How long have you been doing that?" She asked, no judgement in her tone. Mike cut a glance to her again, melting at the sight of her smile. "Uh... I didn't keep track really." He admitted, making her laugh a little bit louder as she wrapped her arm around his own, leaning her head on his shoulder. "You're so... ridiculous, Mike." El muttered. The way she said ridiculous felt almost special, her learning of larger words having a bit of an impact on how she talked. He didn't mind. Mike didn't mind anything about her. His head gently rested on hers, and the two looked at the screen. Bender walked triumphantly across the field, sticking his fist in the air while the credits started.

He could stay like that forever. Forget the world. The night shift was

all that mattered- this moment was all that mattered.

Suddenly, the lights came up, and a familiar face came out into the theater.

“Come on, Wheeler, your break is up! You still have to take the trash out!”

Mike rolled his eyes, sitting up while El moved away. “Okay, okay-go ahead and get in a bag already.” He retorted with a smirk. A faint ‘very funny’ was the last thing the other employee said before leaving, allowing the two a moment. Mike looked back, studying the expression on El’s face- one of contentedness. “Did you like the movie?” He asked, to which she nodded. “It was interesting. Is that what really happens in detention?”

He shrugged to feign innocence, but she didn’t notice that part, standing up and brushing M&M crumbs off her clothes. “I should get home. Ho- Dad’s probably wondering about... The movie.” El said, explaining subtly that he’d be worried more about her. Mike understood, of course, standing with her. “Alright. It should pass parent okay-ness.” He laughed softly. The two looked at each other again- something they did often, while Mike took her hand one more time. “I’ll see you later?”

One of El’s thumbs gently brushed his knuckles before she nodded. “See you later.” Her voice was even softer, practically a whisper. Then she leaned up, and Mike leaned down, and they shared a brief kiss, sweet and innocent. Their faces lit up afterwards, smiles on their lips, before El scooted past him to the door. Mike watched, sighing a little bit in wonder. He didn’t understand how one person could be so fascinating.

“ *Wheeler !*” A voice rang through the theater again, shocking him out of his daze. “Coming!” He yelled, running out of the theater and back to work.